

THE STORY-TELLER.

LITTLE WHITE SOULS.

By Florence Marryat.

AUTHOR OF "FIGHTING THE AIR,"
"LOVE'S CONFLICT," ETC., ETC.

(Continued.)

'Deed, and it's jest freetful,' said Miss Margie, in her provincial twang, 'to see a set of dunderheads tairned the wrang way for the sake of a wee bit of a pasty face wi' twa beeg eyes in the meedle of it. It's eno' to mak' a godfearing woman praise the Laird that has kept her in the straight path. For I'll no affairm that's by mee ain doin' that I can hand up in my heed the day with the Queen o' England herself if need be.'

'But Mrs. Lawson is very, very lovely—there cannot be two opinions on that subject cried the generous-hearted Mrs. Dunstan. 'For my own part I never saw a more beautiful face than hers, and my husband says just the same thing.'

'Eh! I nae doot it! The cairnals beed is tairned like all the rest of them. But he cannot ca' it reet that men should rin after a leddy that has a lawful meered husband of her ain.'

'But you have such strange notions, Miss MacQuirk. If a gentleman shows a lady the least attention you call it 'running after her.' We are like one family shut up in this little station by ourselves. If we are not to be on friendly terms with each other we are indeed to be pitied.'

'Friendly tairms,' exclaimed Miss Margie. 'Do you call it friendly tairms to be walking in the dairk with anither mon's wife? An' that's jest what my gude brother saw yester e'en as he was comin' hame fra' mess.'

'What man! whose wife? asked Ethel Dunstan, for once interested in Miss MacQuirk's scandal.

'Ah! I dinna ken the mon, but the leddy was Mrs. Lawless herself. And her husband was at the mess the while, for Andrew left him at the table, and he was comin' home in the dark and he saw Mrs. Lawless in her garden at the dead o' neet walking with a strange mon—a tall mon—and stout, and not unlike the cairnal, Andrew says.

'What nonsense! Charlie was back from mess by eleven o'clock,' said Mrs. Dunstan, with an air of annoyance. 'When you repeat such stories Miss MacQuirk, he good enough to keep my husband's name out of them, or you may get into trouble.'

'Ah, well, Mrs. Doonstan, I only mentioned that it was like the cairnel. Dootless he was at the mess or at home the while. It was half-past ten when Andrew returned. But it is hairdly reet that Mrs. Lawless should be walking in her garden at that hour o' neet and with anither mon than her husband. I doot but someone should infairm Mr. Lawless of the circumstance.'

'Well, I advise you not to be the one,' replied Ethel Dunstan, tartly. 'Jack Lawless is considered a fire-eater amongst men, and I don't think he would spare the woman even who tried to take away his wife's character.'

'Eh, Mrs. Doonstan, who talks of takin' awa' her character! I doot its but little she's got, pair thing and t'wad be a sin to rob her of it. But its a terrible thing to see how gude luiks air rated abuve guid deeds, and enough to mak' all honest men thank the Laird who has presairved them fra the wiles of the enemy. And now I'll wish

you the gude mairnin, Mrs. Doonstan, for I have several other calls to pay before tiffin.'

And so the old scandal-monger had left the colonel's wife in the condition in which we found her.

Of course if there had been no more truth in it than in the generality of Miss MacQuirk's stories, Ethel Dunstan would have laughed at and forgotten it. But there is just sufficient probability of its being a fact to give a coloring to the matter.

For Mrs. Lawless is not a woman that the most faithful husband in creation could look at without some degree of interest, and Colonel Dunstan being guileless of harm, has expressed his admiration of her in the most open manner. She is a graceful, fairy-like creature, of two or three and twenty, in the flush of youth and beauty, and yet with sufficient knowledge of the world to render her the most charming companion. She has a complexion like a rose leaf, a skin as white as milk, large limpid hazel eyes, a pert nose, a cooing mouth, and hair of a sunny brown. Fancy such a woman alighting suddenly in and out-of-the-way, dull, dried up little hole of a station like Mudhanah, and in the midst of some twenty inflammable British officers. You might as well have sent a mitrailleur amongst them for the amount of damage she did. They were all alight at the first view of her, and hopelessly burned up before the week was over. She is devoted to her Jack, and has in reality no eyes nor thoughts except for him; but he has become a little used to her charms, after the manner of husbands, and so she flirts with the rest of the regiment indiscriminately, and sheds the light of her countenance on all alike, from the colonel downwards. The wives of the 145th Bengal Muftis have received Mrs. Lawless but coldly. How can they look into her heart and see how entirely it is devoted to her husband? All they see is her lovely smiling face, and contrasting it with their own less beautiful and somewhat faded countenances, they imagine that no man can be proof against her fascinations, and jealousy reigns supreme in the 145th with regard to Cissy Lawless.

Ethel Dunstan has no need to fear a rival in her colonel's heart, because she possessed every atom of his affection, and he has proved it by years of devotion and fidelity, but when a woman is once jealous of another she forgets everything except the fear of present loss. Colonel Dunstan is vexed when he comes in that morning from regimental duty to find his wife pale and dispirited, still more so to hear the tart replies she makes to all his tender questioning.

'Are you not well—my darling? he asks.

'Quite well, thank you; at least as well as one can be in a hole like Mudhanah. Charlie! where have you been this morning?'

'Been, dear! Why, to mess and barracks, to be sure! Where else should I have been?'

'There are plenty houses to call at, I suppose. What is the use of pretending to be so dull? You made a call, late last night, if I am not much mistaken!'

'Last night! What, after mess? I only went home with Jack Lawless for a minute or two?'

'Did you go home with Mr. Lawless?'

'Yes—at least—he didn't walk home with me, exactly, but he came in soon afterwards.'

'Of course she was in bed?'

'Oh, no, she wasn't. She was as

brisk as a bee. We talked together for a long time.'

'So I have heard! In the garden,' remarks Mrs. Dunstan, pointedly.

'Yes! Was there any harm in that?' replies her husband. 'Our talk was solely on business. Is any thing the matter, Ethel darling? You are not at all like yourself this morning.'

But the only answer Mrs. Dunstan gives him is indicated by her suddenly rising and leaving the room. She is not the sort of woman to tell her husband frankly what she feels. She thinks, and perhaps she is right, that to openly touch so delicate a matter as a dereliction from the path of marital duty, is to add fuel to the flame. But she suffers terribly, and in her excited condition Col. Dunstan's open avowal appears an aggravation of his offense. 'He is too noble to deceive me,' she thinks, 'and so he will take refuge in apparent frankness. He confesses he admires her, and he will tell me every time he goes there, and then he will say, "How can you suspect me of any wrong intention when I am so open with you?" Business indeed! As if he could have any business with a doll like Mrs. Lawless. It is shameful of her to flirt with married men in this disgraceful way.'

Yet, Mrs. Dunstan and Mrs. Lawless met at the band that evening and smile and bow to and talk with one another as if they were the best friends in the world; but the colonel is prevented by duty from doing more than arrive in time to take his wife home to dinner, and so Ethel's heart is for the while at rest. But during dinner a dreadful blow falls upon her. A note is brought to the colonel which he reads in silence and puts into the pocket of his white drill waistcoat.

'From Mr. Hazelwood, dear?' says Ethel interrogatively.

'No, my love, purely on business,' replies the colonel as he helps himself to wine. But when the meal is concluded he walks into his dressing-room, and re-appears in his mess uniform.

'Going to mess, Charlie?' exclaims his wife in a tone of disappointment.

'No my darling—business! I may be late. Good night!' and he kisses her and walks out of the house.

(To be continued.)

THE AGRICULTURIST

PROFITABLE AND UNPROFITABLE DAIRY COWS.

Professor Sheldon has contributed an article to the *Squire* on the butter yielding capacities of individual cows of the same breed, in which he offers suggestions for the consideration of all who keep cows for dairy purposes. He has a conviction, he says, that only a small proportion of practical dairy farmers are as well aware as they ought to be how great a disparity there is in the butter-yielding capacity of different cows of any one particular breed, though they know that such disparity exists between different breeds. That the volume of milk differs considerably, even when the cows are all fed on exactly the same food, they know well enough, and they have nebulous notions that the milk of different cows varies in quality; but the sensible difference there commonly is between the milk of one cow and the milk of another in the same herd is a matter not clear, unless pains are taken to make it so. If farmers only realised that inferior milking, whether as to quality or to quantity, or both, means an unprofitable cow, they would soon change her for another. But, instead of this, the bulk of them go on for years, not only milking such cows, but actually breeding from them, and so perpetuating the mischief. Milk is the chief aim and end of a cow's existence, and beef at last. We want her to milk well for half-a-dozen years and to make a good carcass then for the butcher; we want her to give us a calf and six hundred gallons of good milk in a year, commencing when she is three years old, and going on until she is eight or nine, and then a good carcass of beef as a finale. This is the sort of cow for dairy farmers; and the aim should be to breed her always, and none worse than she, if there is to be profit in dairying. It is worth while to remember that breed has more influence than food on the quantity and quality of milk, so that to breed the right sort of cows is a matter of the first importance. The foregoing remarks apply particularly to farmers who make cheese or butter, because they require quality as well as quantity of milk from their cows; but with milk-selling farmers the case is different, for quantity rather than quality is the thing they require. The quality as well as the quantity can, of course, be influenced by food; and the latter is commonly increased at the cost of the former or by using such food as brewer's grains in large quantities, and both are increased by the use of cake and corn, by shelter from cold and storms, and by kindly treating in general. During the whole of the year, even when the cows are out on the pastures, and particularly when they are in the sheds in winter, it pays to give them a pound or two of cake or a "bit of licking," every time they are milked. They appreciate this sort of thing, and make a good return for it—if they are the right sort of cows. Every dairy farmer should have a set of graduated cream gauges—simple things only costing a few shillings—so that he may ascertain the quality of each cow's milk, and he should keep a record of this, as well as of the quantity, entering both of them in a book, against the cow's name. This method of going to work has a very considerable educational value: it is essentially practical, and not at all theoretical in its bearings; it tells the farmer which are his best cows, which the best to keep and breed from, which of them responds most freely to improved food, which of them is the best "all-round" cow, which has the greatest "staying power," and so on, acting and reacting in various ways to the farmer's advantage. In the domain of butter-making the value of these tests is specially clear, for there is a great difference in the butter-yielding capacity of different cows, many of which are not worth keeping for that purpose. I do not intend to advocate the claims of any one breed over any other breed of cows, but I wish to emphasise the fact that cows of the same breed and in the same herd vary considerably in practical merit. Some breed of cows will do well almost anywhere, while others are so constituted physically that they require good food and a genial climate to do any good at all. There are some tribes and families of short-horns which would be hard to beat at the milk pail, and which are at the same time good beef-makers at the finish. The question of beef, indeed, is one of great moment in these days, and it is for this reason that the short-horns, as a breed, find favor all

over the land, and in many other lands than Britain. Were it not for this, the Ayrshires would beat them out and out, and in the present day we cannot well afford to look for milk alone, or beef alone, in a breed of cattle, but we must have both in the highest degree attainable, combined with early maturity and vigor of constitution. The breeding of stock pays well, and will continue to pay well, where good stock are bred. But where there is breeding there must be milking, and we must look equally to the three crops a cow gives—the calf, the milk, and the beef, each of which has a high value of its own; and no cow is truly valuable who does not yield a good crop in each department. Breeding, then, is the foundation of success, for hereupon is laid the superstructure of the three crops—a superstructure which is perennially repeating itself, improving or deteriorating as the foundation is kept in repair, is strengthened and improved. Few men have a genius for selection and classification of animals in breeding, and there are fewer still who have attained the highest possible results; but at the same time the rank and file of dairy farmers can go on improving their stock, if only they will take pains that are necessary.

Old gent—"Ah, Mrs. B., did you keep a diary during your visit to the country?" Mrs. B. indignantly—"No, sir, I didn't. The family bought milk from the neighbors."

"What on earth induced you to marry?" asked Sardou of Bernhardt once during a rehearsal of "Fédora." "Why? Because it was the only thing that I had not yet tried."

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